



# Stewardship Assistance

## Capacity Building for Community-Based Efforts



**The Resource Protection and Stewardship Unit (RPSU)** promotes locally-based environmental stewardship by:

- Partnering with states and local groups in their efforts to identify, understand, and solve their own environmental problems; and by
- Fostering collaborative efforts with citizens, grassroots organizations, and all levels of government.



Collaborative Watershed Decision Making

Building capacity for local stewardship is key to future environmental decision making and resource management. RPSU is involved with several key activities that seek to build capacity for local environmental efforts.

- The **Colorado Watershed Assembly (CWA)** is a statewide umbrella organization bringing together the broad array of Colorado interests and government agencies working in watershed protection. CWA was formed in 2000 with very active EPA leadership, participation, and financial support. The group has been the prime sponsor behind a 2002 State Legislature bill to allow Colorado State income tax refunds to be donated to the watershed protection fund. EPA Region 8 is actively represented on the CWA Steering Committee and chairs two sub-committees that seek to foster agency cooperation and financial success of watershed groups.



Rio Grande River, Colorado

- **Financial Sustainability:** Watershed groups cite lack of resources for administrative and operational purposes as their number one obstacle. With more-and-more emphasis being placed on local environmental decision making, long-term sustainability of watershed (and other natural resource protection) groups is a serious nationwide problem.

Region 8 is developing a two-pronged approach to assist groups with this need: 1) performing outreach to individual groups to assess needs and provide individual assistance; 2) providing a training presentation on stewardship, sustainability, and financial strategies. Region 8 is also developing a “Watershed Group Survival Kit” in the context of the watershed approach.

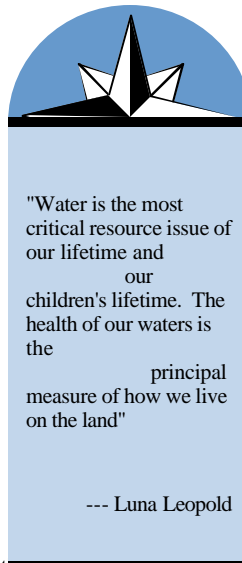
## Land Conservation

Region 8 has recognized the opportunities in encouraging broad natural resource partnerships between watershed groups and land conservation entities. RPSU is currently engaged in the following:

- Providing Regional Geographic Initiative (RGI) grant money to the *Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts* to a hold a conference called *Opportunities for Natural Resource Partnerships*;
- Facilitating the *Red Mountain Watershed Partnership*, with the State, US Forest Service, Trust for Public Land, Ouray County, and EPA Region 8 as partners. The partnership is focused on cooperation between the entities, identifying liability obstacles to land conservation, and improving water quality through land conservation and cleanup;
- Providing training on land conservation tools.
- Park County RGI and Chico Basin RGI Projects: Providing Park Co., CO and The Nature Conservancy with RGI grants to bring together rural agricultural landowners and other stakeholders to identify environmental issues and local leaders, slow habitat fragmentation, and identify ways to preserve habitat in the face of impending growth.



**The Region 8 *Natural News Newsletter*:** This acclaimed newsletter describes Region 8 activities related to community-based environmental protection, watershed efforts, environmental justice, ecosystem protection and science. Articles summarize in lay language complicated programs such as water quality standards and TMDLs. The newsletter gives information about items such as documents, conferences, web-sites, funding opportunities, and environmental strategies.



EPA providing sampling support

## Organizational Development and Technical Assistance:

Small grants to locally driven environmental efforts catalyze organizational development and activities. Usually, the small amounts of funds leverage in-kind services and funding that are many times greater than the original grants. Staff also provide significant assistance in program understanding and access, as well as technical expertise ranging from facilitation to tracing contaminated groundwater in mined lands.

**Training Opportunities:** Staff work to obtain low or no-cost training from a variety of sources, including headquarters, for community needs ranging from understanding the Clean Water Act and river restoration to facilitation skills. They also readily accept invitations to present information at conferences or take the initiative to develop conferences (e.g., Fractured Rock Aquifers international conference and Water Quality at Missouri River Natural Resources conference) in order to provide environmental information, create awareness of issues, build capacity to lead environmental protection, and encourage environmental stewardship.

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